

[Ed Crawford]

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Folk stuff - Range lore

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

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Ed Crawford, [86?] was born on his father's ranch in San Saba Co., Tex. Ed was taught to ride horses at an early age, and was employed as a cowboy on the TOT Ranch in San Saba Co., when he was 10. He later became so proficient in riding wild horses that he was employed on several ranches as a horse trainer. Then later, he entered contests and rodeos, later promoting three rodeos of his own. With his savings, he purchased the WT Ranch in San Saba Co., in 1913. During the Fall roundup on his range in 1913, he broke his right leg, and has been unable to ride since. He sold his ranch in 1935, and now resides in the city of San Saba. His story:

“ Ride!? Why, when I a was a young man, I could ride anything that wore hair that you could drag, haul, or ship. I started riding hosses when I was so young my dad'd have to tie the stirrups up to where my feet could reach them, then tie my feet to the stirrups and send me to the post office after the mail. Yep. Toted the mail before I can recollect doing any thing else.

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“ Why, I've always been around hosses and stock. Starting when I was born on my dad's ranch, the 'Half Moon T,' in San Saba Co. Along about the time I was born, on Nov. 20, 1872, dad ran a little over 2,000 head in his iron, which was made like this: . He later on ran a [lit le?] over 3,000 head, but no more then that. That was as big as he ever got, and I don't know what he started with. I do know, however, that he built the first house where the city of San Saba now stands.

“ In a way, I was sorta handicapped around the ranch when it come to learning cow critters and hosses, because everybody was too busy making a living, and I was too young to mess with. I had two brothers that started ranches while I was still in my teens. Bill Crawford, 89 now and living in Roswell, N.M., started the "[MH?] Connected. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 ' I reckon he run around 500 heed in his iron. You make it like this: . Jack Crawford run around 500 head in his 'Cross A Cross,' made like this: . There was an old man by the name of John [Graves?] that took an interest in me, and he learnt me what I knowed about cow critters. His ranch, the 'TOT,' had from four to 500 on it.

“ Several years before I was 10, I started going over to his spread, and he'd teach me. Every time he done a thing, he'd explain to me why he done it. Result was, that by the time I was 10, I was a pretty fair cowboy, and he begun to paying me 50¢ a day for days when we had work a-plenty to do. During roundups, branding, and so on. Off and on, I worked for him 'til I was 20, but I worked other places in the mean time.

“ One of the places I worked, was the Blum Ranch in Hill Co. Old man Blum had three brands before he decided to keep the last one. We first had the ' LSH,' which was the prettiest brand ever I seen, then he had the ' BLUM ' brand, then the last one and the one they still run, is the ' Cross BL,' made like this: .

“ Leon Blum was the first man in that part of the country to fence any size pasture. He fenced 4,000 acres, and it was every bit cut down in a week's time. You know, they didn't want no fences, and was ready to fight for open country. Blum didn't pay no never mind

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to them, but went right ahead, and fenced it right back. They never cut that one down, neither.

“ I reckon I was 17 when I went to work there. Hired out to Hober Gray, the foreman and wagon boss, as a hoss buster. Now there's a man that's drunk more whiskey, than ary three men in Ft. Worth. He was never drunk, but was always drinking, and you never could catch 3 him when he couldn't outshoot ride, or rope you. He was a wizard for right at it. He had cowsense a-plenty with it. That's the reason he stayed foreman of that ranch so I long when there were other young men to hire. He made old man Blum plenty of money.

“ The Blum ranch had a good sized wild hoss herd, running from three to 500 head[.?] I worked full time from the time I was 17 'til I was 19, busting and training hosses. I don't recall any special hoss right now, but there were a number of them that turned out to be real good stock, and could work a herd like nobody's business.

“ Hoss herds are just like a herd of any other kind of stock. You'll always find a few meaner then the rest. The Blum hosses ran wild, and when we wanted a few head to bust, we'd ride out and pen what we wanted. Some of then wouldn't pen, so we'd work a shenanigan on them. Instead of driving them, we'd drive the good ones to where they were, and they'd mix in with the good ones. Then we'd drive the whole bunch to the pen, and pen them all.

“ Did you ever see anybody ride a bucking hoss? Well, you know when they ride them in the rodeos, they just ride them for a set time of a few minutes. [When?] we busted them on the Blum, we didn't use a pen, but busted them right out on the open prairie, and when we got throwed, we lost the hoss because he took right back to where he'd been used to running wild. The result was that you stuck to your hoss like a leech to save more trouble, and you'd have to ride for 30 minutes at a time, some of the time. The reason it wasn't every time was because 30 minutes is a hell of a lot of pitching, and takes an awful lot of energy. You could count on those that were worst to break, being the best hosses when they 4 finally did got down to business. You hardly ever see a rodeo bronc buster with

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the nose bleed, because he don't stay with it long enough. You hardly ever saw one of without the nose bleed when we left a bronc in them days. Another thing, if a feller was a greener and didn't know how to brace himself while on a wild one, he could very easily have his guts busted out when a hoss come down stiff legged. That's the reason that few men were proffessional hoss busters as I was, because it was so dangerous, and you had to be alsmot born with the knack of handling them ornery critters.

“ While I was on the Blum, I made two trips to Kansas City with a whole train load of cow critters. There's 30 to a car and in those days, there were 15 cars to the train. It took a little over a week then, to get to Kansas City because we'd stop every other day and graze the stock. Then the little old engines they had then, wouldn't hardly pull your hat off your head, and when making any kind of a grade, it always looked to me as if we'd [have?] to get out and push like they done in stage coach days.

“ There's one thing that happened while I was on the Blum, and was happening before I went there, that always puzzled me. I reckon that it took about four years, all told. The Mob they used to have in San Saba Co. Nearly every body's read about it in the news papers, but they never got the full details, and I reckon no paper'll ever be able to put it all out. It just takes somebody that lived through it, like I done, and there's many a thing I'd never tell because I wouldn't live to enjoy the fruits of such telling. Now, that you might understand just what I mean, I'm going to explain how it all started. There were a bunch of [nesters?] and small cattlemen that didn't have very good grass for their 5 cattle, and couldn't get any more land because the other ranchers had already took it up. The only way these fellers could figure out to get more land, was to scare these other ranchers plum out of the country, then take up their land for a song, and sing the song themselves.

“ Now, that sounds pretty good, but when they went to work to do the scaring, they killed a man. Then, first thing you know, they killed another. Where you have so many in a bunch, your secret's bound to out, so the ranchers found out about the scheme in short order.

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After they found out the scheme, they couldn't get anything on the outlaw gang, called 'The Mob,' so they started in to fighting fire with fire.

“ For a number of years there, when the right gang, you might call them the vigilance comittee, [because?] that's the way they worked, just like a vigilance comittee of old times, when the vigilance comittee got the goods on a man they suspicioned of being one of the mob, it put masks on, and hung the Mobman. There was one big difference between the vigilance comittee which puzzled folks not in on it, and that was why they'd not put their masks on 'til they were in the vicinity of the man they were after. The Mobmen wore their masks all the time they were together. Some of them didn't know their own members. I know that because I was told so after it was all over and the rangers had to stay four years to get it over with, it was that tough to bust up.

“ Things were [pretty?] tough when old Captain Bill McDonald brought in the toughest rangers on the force. There was another captain that came with him. Captain John L. Sullivan.. Either of them were equal to an army of ordinary men, and I don't believe 6 they had a nerve in their body because they certainly wouldn't have been afraid of the devil himself had he shown up in the Mob. Some of the men that came with them were Edgar T. Niel, Bob McClure, old man Bill McDonald's nephew Billy McCauley, Jack [Harvell?], a feller name of Maddox, old Blue Bell, nobody ever knowed his real name but everybody called him Blue Bell, and he'd druther fight than eat. Then, there was Dudd Barker. Dudd was about the youngest, and him and me hit it right off together.

“ I recall one night at a dance when I sat down to rest awhile, and he come over and set down by me. He run his hand up my back and [?] felt my six shooter. He says, ' Is that a pretty good gun?'

“ Nothing for me to say there but admit I had a gun, and said. ' Its a dandy.' He never said another word about it, but just left me alone. You know, when the rangers come in there

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to bust that fighting up, they had a law passed where men weren't supposed to wear guns any more.

“ After the rangers left San Saba Co., Fort Stockton elected him sheriff, and he kept it for 20 years. Just to show you what kind of a man he was, I'll tell you what he done while sheriff there. A rancher there that hired all Spiks, come into town one day and reported that his Spiks had run him off and told him not to come back. Dudd detailed a couple of deputies to go out and straighten it out. They went out, but came right back in and said that the Spiks wouldn't let them in the place. Dudd says, ' I'll tend to this myself, then.'

“ He goes out and kills seven of them, then come back and hunted his deputies up. He said when he found them, ' Any man of mine that can't take care of his job, can't work for me. You're 7 fired!' While he was sheriff there, he made several trips into San Saba, and one day when we were talking together in a cafe, there were some young men acting tough. Just before this, a young man had been shot down right on the street, by one of the fellers that had been running with this gang? Dudd says, ' I just wish I was sheriff here for one month. I'd straighten them fellers out so quick it'd make their hard heads swim.'

“ There was a feller in there, that I never did know at time whether he was a member of the Mob, the Vigilance comittee, or the rangers. I do know that he was sudden death to anybody that bucked him. His name was Jim Miller there, although I have found out his real name since then, and have talked to him. Of course, I never did find out anything about his San Saba Co. business. I just had to guess on that. He was supposed to have killed 25 men altogether during the trouble.

“ I personally saw him down one man. A stranger there, that I'd never seen before. This stranger walked up to Jim, and they both talked fast for a bit. They were just across the street from me, and I never did hear a word they said, but I did see them start to walking out to the middle of the street. My heart jumped into my mouth when they done that, because I figured what was coming next. They put their backs together when they reached

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the middle, and walked 15 paces forward from each other. Then they turned real fast and shot. The stranger's pistol didn't shoot at Jim's, because Jim's shot had already reached him and threw him off balance. And, to this day, nobodys ever found out where that feller come from. Jim reported that he never saw the man before, either.

“ The State of California sent for him to come out and work 8 on the Clara Smith case. Paid his expenses to and from San Saba, too. I later found out his his real name was Bill Fossett, and he had been a sheriff up North somewhere before he came down to San Saba.

“ My dad and him were talking cattle one day, and Bill told him about an experience he had while the Clara Smith case was being tried. He said he was a-standing by the door leading to the court room, and there was a big crowd pushing and shoving around to find seats. He said all of a sudden, he felt a hand go into his pocket after his bill fold. He said that the bill fold, was so big, that it was hard to work out. The theif let his hand be still for a little, then worked it again. After he'd worked it about three times, Bill said he whispered to the thief and said, ' You better go get a live one. This one's dead.' He said that pick pocket like to have tore the front of the building down, trying to get out of there. If you went to get in touch with Bill[.?] His son, Lew Fossett, works in the post office at Tulsa Okla.

Oh yes. I recall another about Bill. I was in the barber shop in San Saba one day, when he come in and took the other chair. There was a bunch of young fellers in the front end, talking about how tough they were, and making quite a to do about it all. Old Bill finally got neck full of it, and he bellered out, ' Shut up! I could whip a pen full like you, and mind the gate while doing it.' They left.

“ Some of those old timers in San Saba were pretty tough themselves. You take old Geo. [Gray?]. He's about 97 now, and run his ' [G9?] ' spread for years and years. While he never had much more 9 than six-700 head at a time, he took care of them right well. He lost some hosses oncet, to some rustlers. A couple of weeks later, a friend of his come

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out of the Territory and told him his hosses were up there. Old George went right up there, and after some kind of a battle, he brought his hosses back. Every head, too. Nobody ever knowed just how he done it, and all he'd say was, 'I got them, didn't I?' He knowed he didn't get off Scott-free, because he had a couple of scabs on his face, and he limped considerable for a spell.

“ That business of handling hosses, and taking care of them, was one of the most important things around any spread. Old Cal Montgomery run around 500 hand of stockers in ' MONT ' iron, and a little over 200 head of hosses. His two boys kept them busted up for sale.

“ Handling hosses was dangerous, too. A feller that learnt to handle wild ones on Cal's spread, Morg Bagley's son, later on got killed in McCullough Co., while riding one. He was out riding, and the hoss throwed him. That wouldn't have been so bad, but his foot caught in the stirrup, and the critter kicked him to death.

“ All kinds of things can happen while you're riding. I broke this leg while riding the range in 1913, and it'll never get back so's I'll be a whole man again. And, I was just riding the range, whereas I've rode in rodeos, and caught them wild out on the prairie. The San Saba cattlemen treated the wild hosses just like they did cattle before fences came. They'd all get together, ride out to the places the hosses stayed, round them up, cut them out, brand them, then turn loose what they didn't want.

“ Among the cattlemen that took part in them roundups were 10 those that I've already named, and Dave Harris, who ran about 200 stockers on his H Bar spread. You make his iron like this: [H ?]. Steve Terry, the first sheriff ever I recall being sheriff of San Saba Co., ran the ' SW ' spread. Then, after Steve was sheriff for 12 years, Bill Doran took his place. Bill ran the ' ELL ' spread. Hugh Miller was sheriff for 20 years after Doran, and he run the ' HU ' Connected, ' made like this: [?] Jim Dofflemier, now that's the way you spell his name but you can go into San Saba Co., and make up any conglomeration of letters, and they'll

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send you to old Jim. He was cattle inspector there in San Saba Co., for years and years, and ran the ' DOF ' spread. His son, Clarence, now runs the main bank in the city of San Saba.

“ I mentioned rodeo awhile ago. Well, I not only contested in them, but ran three of them myself. Promoted them, ran them, and contested in them. Pulled off one of them at San Saba, and two of them at Goldthwaite. The Goldthwaite rodeo grounds were two farms. A bunch of us got in there, and cleared the whole place, then all entered the contests.

“ One of the first moneys I got, was in goat roping. You talk to somebody that knows about goat roping, and he'll say that my 17 minutes for first money was some roping! Other rodeos I won first money for this and that, was Lometa, Starr, and San Saba.

“ Oh, I tell you. When I was cattling it, I could ride or rope anything. Whem old Spanish and Mustang hosses were mean to ride too. I've had them run backwards, and pitch in every way imaginable with me, but I rode them.

“ It was right after I bought the ' WT ' spread in San Saba, the year of 1913, that I broke my leg in the [Fall?] round up. I 11 stayed right with the work, though, doing what I could with my busted leg 'til 1935, when I sold the spread. It never was such a big one, but it was a good little ranch. I reckon I run around 200 head on it average.

“ I now live in the city of San Saba, like some old hoss that's got too old to work, and is pastured out to die [when?] and if he makes his mind up to kick the bucket. I like to make these rodeos, though, and live the old life over again. I like to see the stock, too. If you could see the difference in them old [mossy?] horned [long?] horn steers we had to fool with, and compare them with the fine stock you can see here at the stock show, you'd feel like I do. There's some of them here, that I place off the neck would make a pretty good steak.